



*Plan to attend the*  
**9th MINNESOTA BIBLE LECTURE**  
**April 28, 2012**  
**Owatonna, Minnesota**

**This year's theme...**

**James - A Book for Practical Christian Living**

Registration - 8 A.M. to 9 A.M.

Introduction - Ray Stone (Maplewood, MN) - 9 A.M.

- The man James; Dating of the Book and Similarity to Job;  
Key words and theme

Chapter 1 - Randy Martin (Lakeville, MN) - 10 A.M.

- Handling trials & temptations; Submission to the Word; Pure religion

Chapter 2 - Matt Glawe (Ogden, IA) - 11 A.M.

- The evils of personal favoritism; The Royal Law; Faith without works is useless

Lunch break - Noon to 1:30 P.M.

Chapter 3 - Christopher Graber (Farmington, MN) - 1:30 P.M.

- Stricter judgment for teachers; Taming the tongue; The wisdom from above vs. earthly wisdom

Chapter 4 - Dan Mayfield (Owatonna, MN) - 2:30 P.M.

- The way to have peace; The way to receive grace; The way to be just;  
The way to prosper

Chapter 5 - Zack Opheim (Aberdeen, SD) - 3:30 P.M.

- Warnings to the rich; Endurance in Suffering; Endurance in the Day to Day



This lectureship is sponsored by the South Twin Cities Church of Christ and the Owatonna Church of Christ. This year it will be held at the Holiday Inn in Owatonna MN, at Exit 45 just off I-35.

For more info, call:  
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## Welcome Letter



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## **James: Introduction, Ray Stone**

### **I. Introduction:**

- A. This year's subject matter is a wonderful choice! "James" is a most useful book.
  - 1. It has been called the "Christian's Owner's manual" and "Gospel of Common Sense".
  - 2. It addresses the "nuts-and-bolts" of Christian living for believers of all spiritual ages.
- B. The intent of this opening lecture is to introduce the book of "James", giving pertinent background information, some basic facts about it, and an overview. This will include:
  - 1. Approximate date of writing, probable author, and the intended recipients.
  - 2. A general "bird's-eye-view" of the entire book, theme, and key words.

### **II. (Body):**

- A. "James" is one of the earliest of the New Testament books, written perhaps as early as 44 AD; certainly no later than 60 AD; most likely middle-to-late 40s.
  - 1. The early Christians had access to this book almost from the beginning, one of the first writings that enabled them to carry Jesus' teaching along with them in black-and-white—as a personal guide in their own lives of faith, as well as an invaluable evangelistic tool. Those Christians surely used "James" in the same way Paul would command in Colossians 4:16, long before that command was written.
  - 2. Having the written word of God in their possession was even greater for the early church than its original miraculous oral form through the inspired apostles, prophets and teachers. See Luke 16:29-31 for a similar example of the value of a written word.
  - 3. Even with our fellow man, the same is true: Our response to a fantastic claim or promise is "Put it in writing and sign your name to it if you want me to believe it." Realize, that's exactly what God did for His church, starting with "James".
  - 4. Think how they must have treasured this early writing from Heaven; then consider: We should value His completed New Testament as much today!
- B. The authorship of "James":
  - 1. A list of men named "James" in the New Testament would be a short one:
    - a. James the brother of John, son of Zebedee, Matthew 10:2, one of the three that made up the "inner circle" of apostles, Matthew 17:1.
    - b. James the Less, Mark 15:40, son of Alpheus, Matthew 10:3—another of the 12 apostles.
    - c. James the son of Mary and Joseph, one of Jesus' earthly half-brothers, Matthew 13:55.
  - 2. That small pool of candidates can be easily narrowed down even more:
    - a. James the brother of John, an apostle, was the first Christian martyr, Acts 12:1-2—killed by Herod long before the book of "James" was written.
    - b. James the Less, also an apostle, can be eliminated because of the I.D. given in James 1:1—notable for what it does NOT say: Compare with Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1, as well as 7 other of Paul's letters: "Paul, **an apostle...**" Not said for bragging rights, or an attempt to impress, but to legitimize his writing: "I'm one of those chosen witnesses, Acts 1:22; 22:15; whose words (spoken or written) are the commandment

of the Lord,” I Corinthians 14:37. James the Less, also an apostle, would have similarly identified himself for the same reason.

3. By process of elimination, then, the “James” most likely to have written this book is the Lord’s brother, son of Mary and Joseph. An objection might be: “If so, why didn’t he call himself ‘brother of Jesus’ in James 1:1, rather than ‘a servant’?”
  - a. There was no purpose in designating himself as “the Lord’s brother”: It wouldn’t legitimize anything, unlike the designation “apostle” which would carry much authority.
  - b. There might even have been some shame involved, since, like His other siblings, James had rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah while He walked on Earth, John 7:5—James may have felt unworthy to claim the relationship.
  - c. He certainly should have believed his brother’s claims: He surely had heard the testimony of John the Baptist, John 1:29; had seen the evidence of the numerous miracles Jesus performed, John 2:23; 6:2; 10:38; etc. But Jesus Himself explained in Mark 6:4: “A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”
  - d. Consider that amazing turnaround on the part of this man: From an unbeliever (John 7:5) to being counted among believers (Acts 1:14) waiting with the apostles and others for the imminent establishing of His kingdom! What was between John 7 and Acts 1, to account for that? Jesus’ undeniable resurrection from the dead (cf. Romans 1:4).

III. Of course, no matter what earthly man He worked through, the real author is Christ, delivering His word via the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 2:13; John 16:13-14.

A. The recipients of the letter:

1. James 1:1 “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad...” That has a definite Old Testament ring to it, as does the entire book—from “the twelve tribes” in the first chapter to Elijah in the last, 5:17. Interspersed between are some 50 references from 18 different Old Testament books! With the exception of a few direct remarks about Christ, “James” could almost be read as part of that Old Law, even more so than Matthew or Hebrews.
2. The Jews of that Old Covenant were certainly “scattered abroad”—see II Kings 17:6; 25:8-11; John 7:35 (“the Dispersion”) and Acts 2:5. But New Testament believers also underwent their own “scattering”, recorded in Acts 8:1 and 11:19. The New Testament church, though largely made up of Gentiles, is “spiritual Israel”, Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:16; and could properly be called “the 12 tribes” as well. Gentile Christians experienced as much trouble from the world as did Jewish Christians: See Acts 15:24; 17:6; 20:29; etc.
3. A safe conclusion: “James” was addressed to Christians generally, Jew and Gentile alike. As such, it speaks to all of us today, regardless of our background or physical heritage.

B. “James” through the ages:

1. Though one of the most practical books in the New Testament, readily applicable to everyday Christian living, “James” is also historically one of the most often attacked—Satan targets it frequently, perhaps **because** it is so useful.
2. Its most famous critic was Martin Luther, 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformer, who rejected “James” and denied its inspiration, calling it a “book of straw” in his introduction to the 1522 Geneva Bible. However, Luther was hardly an impartial judge, since he held to the false doctrine of “salvation by faith alone”, a doctrine clearly refuted in James 2:24.
3. Truth in any field is never self-contradictory, least of all in spiritual matters (I Corinthians 14:33). If one’s personal belief runs contrary to clear Bible teaching, he (if honest) must make a choice, rejecting one or the other.
4. Unfortunately, Luther chose to reject the wrong one, eliminating “James” from his mental “Bible” because of his perception of a clash between it and Paul’s letter to the Romans. In his mind, Paul’s “salvation by faith” (Romans 4) and James’ “salvation by works” (James 2) were in hopeless contradiction.

5. Here, though, is the fascinating part: Both Paul and James use the same example—Abraham—to prove each side of this supposed clash: More, they even use the very same Old Testament quote (Genesis 15:6, in Romans 4:3 and James 2:23) to prove their respective points. Clearly, there is no clash here; both are looking at the same truth: A working faith, or a faith that works. Neither “faith” nor “works” are “alone”—Luther, by adding that single word, created the very contradiction with which he struggled so mightily. Such a simple answer, for such a great mind to have missed! The lesson seems clear: Be sure you are considering what the Bible actually says, not just what you think it says, or what another says it says.
6. Other charges often leveled against “James” are that it is poorly organized, somewhat disjointed, inconsistent, chaotic, confusing rather than clarifying; certainly not the kind of book God would have authored. In this series of lectures today we have the opportunity to see first-hand just how unfounded are such characterizations.
7. The various New Testament books are not cookie-cutter in design and intent: Some are simple (II Corinthians 11:3); some complex (II Peter 3:16). “James” is not the poor step-child of the New Testament; rather, it is one of its jewels, well-constructed, relevant, useful, “common sense”—as we will see today.

C. Theme(s):

1. The writer places special emphasis on Old Testament characters to illustrate truth:
  - a. Abraham (2:21) and Rahab (2:25) as examples of justification by works.
  - b. Job (5:11), our example of patience in suffering.
  - c. Elijah (5:17), illustrating the power of righteous prayer.
2. If we could isolate a single verse representative of James’ theme, one of two would be likely candidates:
  - a. 1:12, enduring trials and temptations
  - b. 1:27, the practice of “pure religion and undefiled”.

D. Key words:

1. **Temptation**—A subject broached immediately, 1:2; James returns to it again and again throughout the book. There are actually two different uses of the word, in English as well as Greek; James chapter 1 contrasts them:
  - a. “Temptations” describing persecutions, hardships, etc.: 1:2 describes this as “falling into temptation”, a cause from without; later translators often prefer the word “testing” in such a context. V. 3 defines it: “...knowing that the **trying** of your faith worketh patience.” This is not enticement to sin so much as discouragement by troubles of this life.
  - b. “Temptation” describing sin, into which we are enticed: 1:12-14 describes this as coming from within—from our own lust. The contrast is plain.
  - c. Thus James gives us a most useful tool, because it solves a seeming contradiction: God cannot be tempted with evil, James 1:13; yet often in Old Testament times God was “tempted” by His people:
  - d. For instance, Numbers 14:22 at the border of the Promised Land, when Israel feared and refused to enter in: God said “You’ve tempted me these 10 times...” But as James defines it, these and others like them are actually cases of “testing”. The Israelites’ failures brought grief to God: Psalm 95:9-10 “Your fathers tempted Me, proved Me...I was grieved with this generation...” See also Jeremiah 48:31-32, God’s grief over the sins of the nation of Moab. God cannot be tempted to sin, but He can be tested with grief over our failures.
2. **Wisdom**—Not just in chapter 3, in which it is contrasted with a false kind, but again found throughout the book, starting at 1:5. In a very real sense, with every instruction and every rebuke James is imparting wisdom to his readers.
  - a. “Wisdom” is often equated with intelligence; it is not. The Bible repeatedly describes wisdom simply as “knowing the right thing to do” in any circumstance. In Proverbs

8:6 wisdom personified says “The opening of my lips shall be right things.” V. 20 says further of wisdom “I walk in the way of righteousness.”

- b. I have learned from experience, one needn’t be smart to be wise: Some of the wisest people I have known were average or lower in I.Q. measurement yet impressive in their wisdom, always knowing the right thing to do in any given situation—not necessarily the easiest, or most popular, or expected thing; but the right thing.
- c. Such is wisdom. It doesn’t require a lot of brainpower; rather, just knowing what the Bible says and being willing to do it—James 3:13. Which brings us to the next “key word”:

3. **Do-er**—technically not a proper word, but coined (by James, 1:22) to reflect a principle central to James’ message throughout:
  - a. James instructs how to “do” Christianity, rather than just “be” a Christian. “So speak ye, and so do...”, 2:12. We are to be “doers of the Law”, 4:11; “do good”, 4:17. This fits exactly with his remarks about pure religion, 1:27: It is defined by the doing.
  - b. One who considers himself a “thinker” rather than a “doer” will not see much of value in the book of James! He will prefer books of a more abstract nature; like Luther, “Romans” may well be his favorite. But he needs “James” even more! Because Christianity is a “doing” religion, not just a “thinking” one.
  - c. It is not uncommon to find such people, who love learning for its own sake; who enjoy the intellectual exercise. They may be among the most faithful students of the Bible, simply for the joy involved in learning what it says—but with no intention of ever doing it. Happily, their open-ended studies will eventually bring them to “James”, the book such ones need the very most; the book that emphasizes from beginning to end the “doing” of what you learn:
    - i. Treat others as equals, chapter 2.
    - ii. Control your tongue, chapter 3.
    - iii. “Speak not one against another,” chapter 4.
    - iv. Approach life’s frustrations with patience, chapter 5
    - v. If suffering, pray; if cheerful, sing, 5:13.
  - d. This early book was right to emphasize “how to live” more than “what to believe”, providing the Divinely-inspired guide those new Christians needed most.
4. **Patience**—mentioned from 1:2 to 5:11! James shows this to be an important attribute for Christians:
  - a. Patience in enduring temptations, 1:12; in awaiting Jesus’ return, 5:7.
  - b. Patience in dealing with this life’s troubles, 5:11; in prayer, 5:17.
  - c. The “patience of Job” is legendary; and that is the very example to which James points us. We need to exercise patience constantly—with ourselves; with our fellow Christians; with those with whom we deal in the world; with God Himself, as He works out His providence in our lives.
  - d. God’s thoughts are different from ours, Isaiah 55:8; so also is His timetable. Psalm 27:14 and Isaiah 40:38, along with many other passages, encourage us to “wait on the Lord”—patience is needed here perhaps more than in any other area of our life.
5. So those are the key words to listen for throughout the lectures today: **Temptation, Wisdom, “Do-ing”, Patience.**

### III. (Conclusion):

A. "James" is a rich book! Sit back and enjoy the speakers to come, and feast on God's word as they expose this great book for us.



Ray Stone, an Oklahoma native, was born in 1943, raised in the Nazarene Church and converted to New Testament Christianity in 1967 at the age of 24. He married Gwen Clayton in 1967, with whom he recently celebrated their 44th wedding anniversary. He attended Elk City School of Preaching in Elk City, Okla. (now Okla. School of Biblical Studies in Okla. City), studying under such men as W.S. Boyett, Gary Colley, and W.R. Craig, graduating in 1973 and later serving on the faculty. He has preached in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Minnesota. Ray moved to Minnesota to preach in 1993, to the disbelief of his fellow Okies and dismay of his family! Having long since adapted to the "harsh climate and strange culture" (as it seemed at the time), Ray and family are now contented Minnesotans, living in Roseville and working with the Maplewood church of Christ, where Ray has been preaching since 1999. He also served as elder for the Maplewood church for 5 years. Ray has three grown children, two living in the area and one who stayed behind in Oklahoma, married and has blessed him with two grandchildren.



## James: Chapter One, Randy Martin

**James 1:1-** <sup>1</sup>James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings. (NASB)

A. Isn't it interesting that the real name of James is "Jacob"?

1. *James* is Middle English, from Middle French, from (assumed) Vulgar Latin *Jacomas*, alteration of Late Latin *Jacobus*, *Jacob*. - Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Includes index. 10th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

2. It's interesting because Jacob was Israel. And here is another Israel writing to Israelite Christians.

3. James is probably the brother of the Lord, has a high standing, and is closely associated with the apostles.

*Ac 21:18* - <sup>18</sup>*And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.* - (NASB95)

*Ga 2:9-12* - <sup>9</sup>*and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.* <sup>10</sup>*They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.* <sup>12</sup>*For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.* - (NASB95)

*1 Co 15:7* - <sup>7</sup>*then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;* - (NASB95)

*Ga 1:18-19* - <sup>18</sup>*Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.* <sup>19</sup>*But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.* - (NASB95)

4. And he certainly kept a strong connection to Judaism.

*Ac 21:18-22* - <sup>18</sup>*And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.* <sup>19</sup>*After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.* <sup>20</sup>*And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;* <sup>21</sup>*and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.* <sup>22</sup>*"What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.* - (NASB95)

B. It is a book about contrasts.

1. It is a contrast of the rich and poor.
2. It is a contrast of a dead faith and working faith.

3. Thus, we would expect to see key words of *faith* (12 times), *works* (12 times), and concepts of *to do*, or *perform* (14 times).

C. Indeed, in chapter one we probably find the key verse.

*Jas 1:22 - <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (NASB)*

1. However, this is after he deals with the concept of trials in the Christian's life.
2. How does a true faith deal with trials? In faith, it grows through them, and becomes a greater follower of the new law of liberty in Christ.
3. Let no one ever accuse God of not being concerned about human suffering. Job is a book that deals with suffering, and is probably the first book penned in the Old Testament. The first book of the New Testament is probably James, which not only deals with trials, but it's the very first thing it addresses.

## I. FINDING JOY THROUGH THE MATURITY FORMED IN TRIALS

### A. What is joy?

*James 1:2 - <sup>2</sup>Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (NASB)*

1. Joy is from Gk. *χαρά* *chará*; gen. *charás*, fem. noun from *chaírō*, to rejoice. Joy, rejoicing, gladness. - Zodhiates, S. (2000).
2. It may not be immediate joy, but it certainly will be the cause of much joy later on.
3. I noticed it is similar to the word for *grace*.

Illustration - Lincoln McIlravy, one of the most celebrated wrestlers in Iowa's storied history, said in an interview as he was being inducted into the wrestling hall of fame, that workouts/lifestyle was so grueling under Dan Gable that even national tournaments, upon which the value of the whole year rested, were relief for him. Current Coach Tom Brands said that to be touched by Gable as a coach was to be touched with all the grace the sport could give. Though it wasn't always fun the trial of being put through the Iowa wrestling room produced potent moments of accomplishment in their lives.

4. *Trials* is from the noun from *peírō*, to perforate, pierce through, to test the durability of things or simply to pass through. Experience, trial, attempt. - Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* : New Testament (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

- a. It is the same word as in this very famous verse.

*1 Co 10:13 - <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. - (NASB95)*

- b. If we translate this the same as vs. 14, then we would put *temptations* here. After all, it is something that tries to entice.
- c. *Tempted* has a different connotation than trial. In our minds, a trial can be initiated by God, but a temptation is initiated by us.
- d. It says that God doesn't tempt anyone! (vs. 13). God can bring about a time of **testing**, but whether we are tempted, and the intensity of it, will be depend on how complete we are in that specific area.
5. Therefore we should consider it joy, because we are only having an opportunity to fix our weak and incomplete areas when these things arise.
- a. It takes a spiritual mind-set to see joy in what others would see as sorrow.

*Ac 5:40-41 - <sup>40</sup>And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. <sup>41</sup>So they went on their way from the presence of the Council,*

*rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. - (NASB)*

- b. It's really God at work, thus, we should be very pleased. He's very good.

**1 Pe 4:12-14** - <sup>12</sup>*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup>but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. <sup>14</sup>If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. - (NASB)*

B. Maturity comes through enduring trials.

**James 1:3-4** - <sup>3</sup>*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (NASB)- <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB)*

1. Endurance is produced from the testing. It is a noun from the verb *hypoménō* , to persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances. It is associated with hope (1 Thess. 1:3) and refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. - Zodhiates, S.
2. Illustration - This is exactly what a weightlifter does. He bears up under weight. He doesn't collapse, but pushes all the way through until the weight is moved. In this way he absolutely becomes stronger. When there is proper pain, there is potent gain.
3. Endurance's perfect result is our perfection.
  - a. This is the Gk. *téleios*. It is the same word for *complete* and *mature*.
  - b. This is what the Word is and what the Word can accomplish in us.

**James 1:25** - <sup>25</sup>*But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (NASB)*

**James 3:2** - <sup>2</sup>*For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. (NASB)*

  - c. This is the exact process our Lord went through for His completeness.

**Hebrews 5:7-9** - <sup>7</sup>*In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. <sup>8</sup>Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. <sup>9</sup>And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB)*

  - d. ***It was Christ's pleasure to do His Father's will, though doing His will was not always pleasurable.***
4. The result is that we're lacking in nothing.
  - a. *Result* is the same Gk. word for *work*.
  - b. Endurance's work is that we are not in need when it comes to maturity/perfection.

C. Wisdom from and for trials will come from God.

1. Trials can make us lacking in nothing, but we need to ask God for wisdom if we are lacking in that area.

**James 1:5** - <sup>5</sup>*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NASB)*

- a. One has to ask what this wisdom is about. Is it in contrast to what would now not be lacking from enduring trials?
- b. I'm fairly sure it's not information as to why the trial is occurring. Job went through

all he did and the one thing he never received was the answer to why it was happening to him.

- c. It could be wisdom in general, but as we will see, the aspect of trials has not concluded, but it is still deeply in its context.
- d. I believe it is wisdom concerning how to handle the trial and grow from it. I think vs. 9 is part of that wisdom. It displays the respective proper state of mind concerning the rich and poor when encountering such.
- e. The point is that God will give it to everyone and very generously. God's wisdom is everywhere! In His book, in nature, circumstances, and especially in His people trained by the Book.

2. The absolute essential is to have complete faith in God when making such requests.

*James 1:6–8 - <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup>being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (NASB)*

- a. Many can be devastated and depressed during repeated trials. They never learn.
- b. *Having no doubts* means you will not be in despair when encountering them. If that's the case, one either doubts God's love, God's abilities, or God's judgment. To doubt any is a slap in God's face and He will give nothing.
- c. Of course, I'm not trying to say one shouldn't grieve a loss. That's healthy, and I spoke concerning that extensively at the last lectureship.
- d. Double minded is literally "two souled." His interests are divided between God and other things.

D. Trials come for both the rich and poor.

*James 1:9–11- <sup>9</sup>But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; <sup>10</sup>and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. (NASB)*

- 1. It's easy to think the poor have far more **trials** from poverty, and therefore have it way worse. But actually both rich and poor have many **tests**, whether seen as tests or not.
- 2. The point here is that poor man is actually in a lofty position. Later on in the book it will say God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. It's easier for a poor man to be humble since he is already in a humble lifestyle.
- 3. The rich may not even see tests/trials that are before them. It appears they are failing miserably. He addresses those who think they have it all, and can just laugh.

*James 4:8–9 - <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. (NASB)*

*James 5:1- <sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. (NASB)*

- 4. This is an especially important message to Jews. Many had the improper paradigm that one was poor because they were a sinner. It's actually the rich who will have a harder time entering Heaven with that mind-set.

*Matthew 19:23- <sup>23</sup>And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. (NASB)*

- 5. Thus, it seems hard for many to believe, but one must glory, that is, be proud/boast of the humble circumstances God has allowed him to be in. The only hope for the rich man is to find that type of humiliation.

E. The true source of trials/temptations.

1. Regardless of the sources, they certainly can yield wonderful results.

**James 1:12** - <sup>12</sup>*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (NASB)*

- a. *Perseveres* is the verb form of *endurance* earlier.
- b. The crown of life goes to one who loves God. The opposite is loathe God for the trials one may encounter, and will be dealt with in this text.

2. The true source of trials/temptations is more complicated than one thinks.

**James 1:13** - <sup>13</sup>*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (NASB)*

- a. This is a very difficult section. Remember the word for a trial/test/temptation is the same word, from *peirásō*. It literally means to perforate, to pierce.
- b. This verse says God is not tempting anyone, but in other verses it clearly says God is tempting/testing.

**Hebrews 11:17** - <sup>17</sup>*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; (NASB)*

- c. The statement “I am being tempted by God” is assumed to be a negative, complaining statement. Perhaps an excuse for failure.
- d. The reason against this is twofold:
  1. God literally is “non-temptable,” and adjective, by evil (ones). It may be a statement, that if said, it tantamount to putting God to the test. This, long ago, was stated as being wrong.
  2. It says He just doesn’t do such things.
  3. Davids asserts: “*God ought not to be tested by evil persons.*” This meaning fits some later uses of the term (e.g. Act. Jn. 57) and it also fits the grammar of the passage: *yáp* introduces a cogent reason (*God ought not to be tested; ipso facto you should cease from doing it*) and *δέ* introduces a somewhat different reason (*he does not test anyone anyway, so you are also wrong in accusing him*). Furthermore, this translation shows that James is drawing upon an important theme in Jewish theology: people in tight places tend to turn and challenge God, and they ought never to do so (for it is unfaith). - Davids, P. H. (1982). *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (82–83). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

- e. I believe it’s not addressing the impetus as to why the trials/temptations occur, but why we feel temptations when encountering a trial/temptation. There is no doubt God allows, or even brings about certain trials. But the only reason it can be considered a struggle/temptation in it is the inherent various weaknesses we have while being in the flesh. The next verse explains this.

Illustration - We just started teaching Michael Palmer how to lift weights. To put 100 lbs. on the bar would be an incredible burden for him. But for me, who has been lifting 1.5x longer than he has been alive, it’s not even enough to warm up. Therefore, it is our lack of “completeness” that determines whether it is even a challenging test.

- f. It is our desires while in the flesh that allow temptations.

**James 1:14** - <sup>14</sup>*But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (NASB)*

- (1. This could be translated as *being dragged out and lured*.
- (2. *Lust* has a negative connotation, but this is the exact same word for *desire*.
- (3. Notice that being tempted is not yet sinning. After all, Christ was tempted in all things. His desires also carried Him and lured Him, but He never yielded even once.

**Hebrews 4:15** - <sup>15</sup>*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet*

without sin. (NASB)

(4. *Is tempted, carried away, and enticed* are all in the passive. It is all done by our desires. If we didn't have desires, then it wouldn't be a temptation. But when we are in this container of flesh, there are going to be countless desires to fight. But God will not allow us to be tempted beyond the ability to resist.

**1 Corinthians 10:13-** <sup>13</sup>*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (NASB)*

G. And there is no joy when yielding to temptation.

**James 1:15 -** <sup>15</sup>*Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (NASB)*

1. Lust can conceive. *Conceive* is from Sullambánō: To catch hold of, to enclose in the hands, figuratively meaning to comprehend, grasp, seize, collect as scattered troops, clasp to oneself. - Zodhiates, S.
  - a. We can't take the *conceived* too far in a parallel to human reproduction. We think of a woman conceiving, but that's already after the act of reproduction has occurred, and then she has no power over whether actual conception occurs. Here our lust has the power over whether to conceive or not.
  - b. *Gives birth* can simply be *brings forth*. And here we have total control as to whether we allow it to come to fruition. We can "nip it in the bud."
2. If we allow sin to "grow up," then sin will be accomplished and bring forth death.
  - a. *Accomplished* is from the same basic word as being *perfect* and *complete*. It is *apoteléō*; from *apó*, and *teléō*, to complete. To perfect, accomplish, achieve the natural purpose as in James 1:15, to be of full stature. - Zodhiates, S.
  - b. Therefore, we can either let the trial/temptation produce endurance which can complete/mature/perfect us, or we can allow sin to be complete and destroy us.
  - c. It *brings forth* death. This is from *apokuéō*, a word which means to swell or get pregnant.
  - d. Lust can give birth to sin, but a mature sin gives birth to death.

## II. FINDING MATURITY THROUGH PROPER SUBMISSION TO GOD

A. We cannot be deceived and think any of the bad surrounding trials is from God.

**James 1:16–18-** <sup>16</sup>*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup>In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. (NASB)*

1. The Devil wants to deceive us, so we blame God for our shortcomings and anguish.
2. But every single perfect/complete/mature gift is from above. And the only way we become that way is through God working our lives.
3. He isn't sneaky or deceptive, but as sin was said to give birth to death, the same word describes that He *brought us forth* through the Word of truth.
4. We are his first fruits, things that were sacrificed to God, that are rich and ripe.

B. Never be angry with the message of the Word, but let it be implanted.

**James 1:19–21 -** <sup>19</sup>*This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (NASB)*

1. *Quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger* is not in this context referring to interpersonal communications, but in regards to what the Word of God yields.
  - a. Our justification from God (*righteousness of God*) will never happen if we waste our time being angry with God.
  - b. Job taught us this. He thought he could bring forth his complaint to God, that he deserved to know why. But he learned that no one has the right to question God.
 

**Job 42:3–6** - <sup>3</sup>‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” <sup>4</sup>‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me.’ <sup>5</sup>“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee; <sup>6</sup>Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.” (NASB)
2. And it is integral to remove all filthiness and wickedness so the implanted Word can flourish within us and save our souls.
  - a. Wickedness is from *kakía*. It's root means *bad*.
  - b. Have we gotten rid of all the filth and bad that remains? When other things are implanted in the ground they will also grow with the Word, but then can choke it out. The author knew what he was talking about, and lived it.
 

*All tradition agrees in describing James as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a man of the most rigid and ascetic morality, faithful in his observance of all the ritual regulations of the Jewish faith. Hegesippus tells us that he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine nor strong drink. He ate no flesh. He alone was permitted to enter with the priests into the holy place, and he was found there frequently upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, and his knees became hard like those of a camel in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God and asking forgiveness for the people (Euseb., HE, II, 23). He was called James the Just. All had confidence in his sincerity and integrity, and many were persuaded by him to believe on the Christ. This Jew, faithful in the observance of all that the Jews held sacred, and more devoted to the temple-worship than the most pious among them, was a good choice for the head of the Christian church. The blood of David flowed in his veins. He had all the Jew's pride in the special privileges of the chosen race. The Jews respected him and the Christians revered him. No man among them commanded the esteem of the entire population as much as he.* - Orr, James, M.A., D.D. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* : 1915 Edition. Edited by Orr, James. Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999.
  - c. The Word is able to save our souls. It literally has the power to save our soul. *Able* is from the Greek word where we get *dynamite*.

C. It is the doers of the Word that will be blessed.

1. Hearers, but not doers, delude themselves.
 

**James 1:22-** <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (NASB)

  - a. Delude is from *paralogízomai*. It is *aside logic*, to reason falsely.
  - b. It is of no value to merely hear. There's no reward for hearing what is said today by these speakers if you don't take it home and implement it. Hold each other accountable to what will be said today.
  - c. Christ taught us this emphatically. Both homes were built by people who heard Christ. But only one acted upon them.
 

**Matthew 7:24–27** - <sup>24</sup>“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. <sup>25</sup>“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

<sup>26</sup>“And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.” <sup>27</sup>“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.” (NASB)

2. To hear the Word, and not act, is like a goofy guy that looks in the mirror and forgets what he just looked at.
 

**James 1:23–24-** <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (NASB)

  - a. *Natural face* is literally *face of birth*.
  - b. *What kind of person* is just one word that can mean *sort/kind*.
  - c. Since this is a Jewish book, I think it akin to a man looking in the mirror and noting he is a Jew, and then forgetting to act like a Jew all the day. It's idiocy.

3. Those who look intently at what they're supposed to do, and do it, are the only ones who will be blessed.

**James 1:25-** <sup>25</sup>But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (NASB)

- a. They have to look *intently*.
  - (1. This is literally to *stoop down near something*, taking a close hard look!
  - (2. Will you look closely at what was said today, or will it be the last time you look at these manuscripts that are attempting to look intently at James?
- b. We are all looking at the perfect law of liberty.
  - (1. Yes, you probably guessed it. It's the same word for what enduring trials can do for us. It is perfect/complete/mature.
  - (2. And, yes, we are still under a law, just a different type.

**Ro 8:1-2 -** <sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. - (NASB)

**1 Co 9:21 -** <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. - (NASB)

**Ga 6:1-2 -** <sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. - (NASB)

- (3. It is a law of liberty.
  - (a. We will also see the law of Liberty in 2:12. Notice each time it mentions a law of liberty there are responsibilities tied to it. The law of liberty acts!
  - (b. How is it a law of liberty? It certainly is liberating compared to the Old Law, and we are liberated from sin. But I believe it is more in line with the fact we are at liberty to do good to others, and that is how we will primarily be judged. They are free to express their love in many ways, not in just how the Law dictated to do it. It all boils down to the last verse of ch. 4. The one who knows the right/good thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.
  - (c. And we shouldn't use our freedom from law as an opportunity for licentiousness.
- (b. How is it a law of liberty? It certainly is liberating compared to the Old Law, and we are liberated from sin. But I believe it is more in line with the fact we are at liberty to do good to others, and that is how we will primarily be judged. They are free to express their love in many ways, not in just how the Law dictated to do it. It all boils down to the last verse of ch. 4. The one who knows the right/good thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.
- c. It is the remembering effectual doer who will be blessed.
  - (1. It's easy to forget lessons in various hearing of God's Word. One way to not

forget is to repeatedly listen. I know many people who listen to sermons again. We have abilities to do so that ancestors would have begged for.

- (2). Everybody is going to be doing something in life. This is literally the *doer of work*. I think we can all testify to the fact that talk is cheap.
- (3). They will be blessed. It means they will be in God's favor.

4. True religion includes restraint and action.

**James 1:26–27-** <sup>26</sup>*If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.* <sup>27</sup>*This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.* (NASB)

- a. Being religious (*thrēskos*), is not just being involved with a religion, but more has to do with the idea of being pious.
- b. One has to be able to bridle the tongue. The complete Word can make the complete man have the ability to bridle not only the tongue, but the body (3:2).
  - (1). Do you have your tongue bridled? We had better or it could have vast spiritual ramifications.
  - (2). It's an ominous thing for God to call our religion worthless. *Worthless* is from Gk. *mátaios*. It means *to no purpose* or *vain*.
- c. Pure and undefiled religion has the idea of not being tainted or polluted.
- d. It also necessarily includes helping widows or orphans.
  - (1). Are you are helping any widows and orphans out at this time in your life? If not, can you give yourself one possible justifiable reason as to *Why not*? It says this is all in the sight of God.
  - (2). Visit is from the verb meaning *to look at*. It's easy not to help what you fail to make yourself see.
  - (3). Many are in distress. It is literally being *squeezed*. If you can afford to go out just once a month to a restaurant, you have the ability help an orphan or a widow.



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## **JAMES: Chapter 2, Matt Glawe**

### **“SOME MISTAKES CHRISTIANS MUST AVOID”**

#### *Overview of Book of James*

The book of James offers many practical admonitions for Christians. In just a few paragraphs, James covers many serious topics that the Christian must consider. Someone has well outlined James in three easy-to-understand points: Chapter 1 – True Religion, Chapter 2 – True Faith, and Chapter 3-5 – True Wisdom. This lesson will focus on chapter 2, so it will deal heavily with the subject of faith.

Beginning with the latter part of chapter 1, specifically verse 21, all the way through chapter 2, James deals with the working side of Christian faith. Faith, by definition, requires action (see **Rom. 1:5, 16:26**). Christians cannot breeze through life having no concern for things, assuming God is just a loving God that wouldn't condemn anyone. Many people today, even in the church, misuse verses like Rom. 3:28 (“*we maintain that a man is justified by faith..*”), falsely teaching that a Christian can be saved without taking any action. Faith is not a feeling. Faith is trust conjoined with obedience. The faith that saves souls is a trust in God to the point that you are willing to do whatever He desires and commands you to do. The very first Christians in Acts 2 were willing to put their faith in Christ based on the message of the gospel preached to them by Peter. That faith fully manifested itself when those 3000 souls asked what they needed to DO, not how they needed to feel. Acts 2:42-46, clearly shows that that they went on to be doers of the Word.

James 2 deals with some specific things that Christians must do (and not do) if their faith is the productive working faith it needs to be. The language is very simple, blunt, and overall, takes a “pull no punches” approach to the message. We are going to break these things into three major points and look at them as “Mistakes Christians Must Avoid.” We will see that it is a mistake to show partiality, a mistake to place unequal emphasis on truth, and that it is a mistake to think that faith alone is adequate for salvation.

#### *The Mistake of Showing Partiality*

The first mistake to avoid is seen in verses **1-9** – the mistake of showing partiality. These nine verses have a strange haunting ring. Maybe it's because they hit so close to home, yet many Christians are afraid to admit it. James simply, clearly, and truthfully speaks of a sin that sits every Sunday in many pews of the Lord's church.

Thayer defines partiality as “respect to the outward circumstances of men and not their intrinsic merits” (Thayer p. 551). So James is not speaking of the sort of partiality a husband shows to his wife, or the partiality (in this case respect) a congregation might show an eldership, but a vain “judging a book solely by its cover” type of partiality. The phrase “*our glorious Lord*,” or “*the Lord of Glory*” (depending on translation) in verse one should not escape our notice. This phrase reiterates the exalted nature of Christ and clearly indicates where Christians should be placing their utmost respect.

### **There are three major problems with showing partiality/respect of persons.**

**First** of all, respect of persons is incompatible with the Lordship of Christ, which can be seen in verse one. People claiming no relationship to Christ (people of the world) show partiality and play politics with their fellow man constantly – **Rom. 1:28-31**. When someone becomes a Christian, they surrender all sovereignty and control to Jesus Christ. (**Rom. 14:9, Acts 2:36-38**) Baptism, the point of conversion, is where a person says “yes” to the Lordship of Christ. (**Rom. 6:3-11**) James argues, therefore, that a life regulated by Christ shows no partiality, no respect for men, for any reason.

**Second**, respect of persons is incompatible with God’s design for fellowship, which can be seen in verses **4-7**. Partiality damages Christian fellowship in the following ways: It causes division – **I Cor. 1:10**. It makes evil judges out of Christian brothers – **James 4:11, 5:9**. It makes our choice contrary to God’s – **James 5:6**. It causes one brother to dishonor another – **Col. 2:2-5**. It dishonors the name Christian, and thus Christ Himself. The very concept of “brethren” is contradictory to prejudice.

**Third**, respect of persons is incompatible with the Law of Love – vs. **8-9**. James points out the inconsistency of claiming an obedient relationship to Christ, while breaking His royal commandment to “love thy neighbor.” He concludes this thought by simply stating that partiality is sinful. James has simply and clearly penned a message that stretches far beyond the first century. This happens all over today. Partiality robs men of identity. It destroys the full humanity of men, and it corrupts the purity of one’s spiritual life. If we shun someone, we may be pushing someone right out of the church, therefore right out of heaven.

### *The Mistake of Placing Unequal Emphasis on Truth*

The audience of James apparently viewed partiality as “no big deal,” therefore causing James to pen verses **10-13**, where we will find our next mistake Christians must avoid – placing unequal emphasis on Truth. Transgression of one commandment of God can cost us our salvation (see **Ez. 18:4, 20**). People find it hard to comprehend this fact, but a small illustration will help bring it into perspective: How many fatal diseases does one need to have to die? Having one fatal disease is just as deadly as having 100. Every sin is a fatal disease!

People also find it hard to view all sin as equal. Because of our fleshy, human nature, we tend to categorize the seriousness of sin. We can even tend to be selective about which commandments of God we obey. (See **Matt. 23:23, James 4:17**). An expert was once asked which poisonous snakes are the most deadly. He answered “They all have what it takes to kill you!” The same can be said of sin.

We need to live our lives understanding that all sin is deadly! Forsaking the assembly is just as sinful as murder in God’s eyes. Having considered this, we still need to be careful of two things: that we don’t distort the grace and mercy of God (**Gal. 5:1**), and that we don’t use God’s grace as an excuse to sin (**Rom. 6:1-2, Gal. 5:13**). We need to live in total submission to Christ, realizing that we are sinners, and do the best we can at being obedient to ALL that God commands us to do. When we do that, we can live in total assurance of salvation! (**I John 1:5-2:1**)

### *The Mistake of Thinking that Faith Alone is Adequate to Save*

In verses **14-26**, James shifts gears a bit and discusses the famous faith/works issue. From this text we can see the third mistake Christians must avoid – thinking that faith alone is adequate to save. Before we delve into the text, it is important to point out the fact that there are two distinctly

different discussions of faith and works in the New Testament. James is discussing Christian deeds, or good works we do as a Christian.

Paul's discussion of faith and works in Romans 4 (and Galatians) is dealing with the idea of merit salvation – someone trying to merit their way to heaven by works of law. **Galatians 2:21** really nails the coffin shut on this line of thinking – “*...for if righteousness comes through law, then Christ died needlessly.*”

**Ephesians 2:8-10** refers to BOTH of these kinds of works. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” (emphasis mine)

In other words, we are not saved as a result of our own merits; we are saved by the grace of God through faith (an obedient faith!) in Christ Jesus. He created us and saves those who obey for the purpose of doing Christian works (deeds). Here's a simple comparison: Paul in Romans – put your faith in God to save you, not in yourself. James – If you have faith in God, you will obey Him and be fruitful for Him. God expects a return on His investment!

Here's the issue **James 2:14-26**: can someone have an action-less faith and be saved? Verse **14-16** shows us the context. A lack of faith situation had no doubt prompted the discussion.

### **From the text we can clearly see three problems and dangers of action-less faith.**

**First** of all, it's dead (vs. **17**). The illustration used in vs. **15-16** shows how a lack of works violates the law of love previously referred to in vs. 8. If a brother has a need and we say “best of luck,” yet claim to be faithful, it's a false claim of faith.

**Second**, it's useless (vs. **18-20**). Anyone can believe in anything. I can claim to believe that I can spontaneously start flying around the room. But until I actually do it, it's just empty words. Faith is the same way. We have to do it – **Matt. 7:21-24**. James is arguing quite simply that works are evidence of faith. Without works, God has no evidence that we are His servants. James makes the same case for evidence of wisdom and understanding in **James 3:13**. Prove it by action.

**Third**, it doesn't justify (vs. **21-26**). The first example James uses is Abraham – **Gen. 22:1-5, Heb. 11:17-19**. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son without question. This proved his faith by his willingness to do the deed God had asked him to do. His trust in God was so strong that he knew Isaac was coming back, one way or another. James also uses Rahab (**Joshua 2, Heb. 11**), which might seem to us to be a bit ironic. However, Rahab trusted God enough to take action, action that might have harmed her, and she was justified accordingly. After offering two powerful illustrations, James states the plain truth again – faith without works is just as dead as a body without the spirit – completely unable to justify anyone before God.

### *One final thought*

I'd like to consider concerning this text: Why Abraham and Rahab??? There were countless people of faith in the Bible, but James chose these two. Why? There could be several reasons. I personally think it puts a stinging clincher on the conclusion of the thought that takes the audience back to the beginning of the chapter. The contrast of rich and powerful Abraham, vs. a lowly prostitute, Rahab provides maximum effect for the danger of favoritism while also offering two excellent examples of true working faith.

### *Conclusion*

Many people today make the claim that they “have faith,” or that they “are faithful Christians,” yet they do nothing that in any way proves that. Faith is not a feeling. Faith is a trust that compels us to action. Faith in Christ begins with total submission to His will. That means Christ is the only exalted thing in our lives. When we have that in perspective, we’ll avoid the mistake of showing partiality to fellow men. True faith means holding all commandments of God in the highest regard. When we elevate God’s Truth in our lives to where it needs to be, we’ll avoid the mistake of picking and choosing which of God’s commands we want to follow. True faith evidences itself by the works/deeds we do for God. When we put our trust in God, hunger and thirst after His righteousness, seek first His kingdom, search and study His Truth, the faith that comes from hearing the Word of Christ will manifest itself in good works.

### Endnotes

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Aside from preaching, Matt owns two small businesses, a commercial ag spraying business, and an auto body restoration shop. He and his wife Sarah have one son, Wyatt, age 3, and one daughter, Kaylee, age 7 months.



## James: Chapter 3, Christopher Graber

I stand before you as a teacher. Many of you here are teachers as well. As a teacher, James 3 has particular relevance to me and for anyone else that is a teacher or considers becoming one. Additionally, though teachers are a primary focus in James 3, there are many lessons embedded within James 3 for everyone. Broadly, we are going to address three lessons covered in James 3 in the time permitted today that have applications for everyone.

I. Lesson 1 – There is a Stricter Judgment for Teachers. James 3:1(NASB95)<sup>1</sup> *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

A. James says, “Let not many of you become teachers.”

1. In the original language the verb is in the imperative mode (a command) “Stop becoming many of you teachers!” This would catch the readers’ attention right away.
2. The Teacher – “To be a teacher was to occupy a position with prestige and authority within the Christian community in the early church. Because of this many people aspired to be teachers...”<sup>1</sup> For the Jew especially, teaching came along with being looked up to and holding a position of prominence. Because it was an office that carried prestige there was a tendency for people to want to ambitiously rush into it with the wrong motivation and a lack of wisdom. As a result, “...the Jewish Christians were attempting to teach what they did not clearly comprehend.”<sup>2</sup> This could be similar to what Paul writes Timothy concerning in 1 Timothy 1:5–7.

B. The reason for the warning is because teachers will incur a stricter judgment –

1. Notice how this stricter judgment is not just reserved for false teachers, or teachers with improper motives, or teachers that lose control of their tongue. All teachers will be held to a higher standard by God! James includes himself in this number saying, “we will incur a stricter judgment.”
2. As A.T Robertson points out, “The reason is obvious. The pretense of knowledge adds to the teacher’s responsibility and condemnation.”<sup>3</sup>
  - a. This was not something new for the Christian age. “Jewish sages also warned against teaching error and recognized that teachers would be judged strictly for leading others astray.”<sup>4</sup>
  - b. Through words teachers can lead people to the truth (sound doctrine) or they can lead them into deception (false doctrine). Through actions teachers can lead people into truth through a good example, or they can contradict the truth they teach, becoming a stumbling block to others. With such power to influence others while claiming to have the capability to lead accurately, it stands to reason that a stricter judgment is appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> I-Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from James*, (UBS handbook series, New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 100-01.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Jas 3:1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Jas 3:1

<sup>4</sup> Craig S. Keener and InterVarsity Press, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jas 3:1.

3. This shows there is a level of spiritual maturity necessary for one to take on the responsibility of teaching. It takes spiritual maturity to stand the stricter judgment.

C. Applications for this warning –

1. Do not regard becoming a teacher lightly. It is an immense responsibility, requiring spiritual maturity, carrying a stricter judgment and should not be rushed into.
2. Be sure to possess the right mentality if you take on the responsibility of teaching. This means not viewing it as an end and not seeing teaching as reaching a position of self-glorifying prominence. This misses the point entirely. Teaching is about service! If you are thinking about becoming a teacher and think teaching is about prominence and self-glorification: DO NOT DO IT!
3. At the same time, do not take the admonition too harshly. This does not mean in order to become a teacher we all must have the same spiritual maturity or knowledge level as one possessing vast degrees in biblical studies and decades in the faith. This is an admonition to take the responsibility seriously, have the right heart, and be willing to give the care and diligence the task demands. Be accountable for what you present and also give diligence to live out the truth you teach.
4. Some practical advice on teaching – Sometimes we are called on to teach and maybe we lack extensive training, or are just not very well versed on a subject. Maybe we are new to teaching. When in this position, be honest about it. Put in the due diligence before teaching, but also learn to say “I don’t know,” or “I’m not sure,” and be willing to put in more study to find out instead of making confident assertions about what you don’t understand (1 Timothy 1:7). Trying to “fake it,” or posturing with confidence when we lack understanding, runs the risk of putting souls in jeopardy making the implications of the stricter judgment a harsh reality for us.

## II. Lesson 2 – The Tongue is Powerful (James 3:2–12).

A. Power is seen by the positive implications of the man that can control speech. James 3:2  
*“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”*

1. Textual note – There are variant translations of the phrase “*stumble in what he says*.” Compare NASB95 “*stumble in what he says*” with NKJV “*stumble in word*.”
  - a. The Greek word is from *λόγος*, which literally means “word.” This can mean broadly, what a person says or speech (2 Corinthians 11:6, Colossians 4:6), or it can be more narrow, for instance indicating *the word*, or doctrine.
  - b. Many commentators maintain that James is addressing stumbling generally in speech. However, there is a possibility that he could be more explicitly indicating, or at least alluding to doctrine, “*the word*.”
    - 1) James uses some form of the noun *λόγος* 5 times in this letter and every other time it is used, it is clearly referring to doctrine (James 1:18, 21, 22, 23, 3:2).
    - 2) If James absolutely wanted to identify only the broader, “*what he says*,” he could have used other words like the verb *εἰπεν*, translated “say,” “said,” or “says,” used repeatedly in chapter 2 (2:3 twice, 2:11 twice, 2:16, and 2:18).
    - 3) However, before jumping to the conclusion that he is *only* addressing doctrine, it must be noted the other words translated “say,” or “says” are all verbs. If James was to use a *noun* to describe speech and it not be the metonymic word “tongue,” this would be the one place it would be used. So, even though this word consistently refers to *the word* everywhere else in James, it could still indicate broader speech, or have an allusion to both.
    - 4) In any case, doctrine is at least part of the discussion, as we are dealing with teachers of doctrine in the context (3:1), and the discussion for the use of the tongue does surely span beyond just how the tongue is used in teaching (3:9).

2. The passage says, the man who does not stumble in “word” is a “perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

- a. Control of the tongue implies a “perfect man” –
  - 1) This does not mean that the teacher must be without any sin. Everyone sins!
    - a) James notes earlier in verse 2, “we all stumble in many ways.” And Romans 3:23 says “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”
    - b) Nobody is perfect, and this is not a call for all the imperfect people to refrain from becoming teachers. If it were, we would have no teachers!
  - 2) The word “perfect” here is not indicating perfect in a moral or sinless sense but being a complete or mature man. The word is *τέλειος*, which means, “...Finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.”<sup>5</sup>
  - 3) We all stumble in many ways, but the mature man, the one fit to teach, he is the man who is not stumbling in “word.”
- b. Control of the tongue implies the ability to “bridle the whole body as well” (3:2).
  - 1) What else is so powerful that, if bridled, the rest of the body can be bridled?
  - 2) James illustrates: James 3:3-4: “*Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.*”<sup>4</sup> *Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.*”
    - a) When the bit is in the horse’s mouth, the rest of the body is also bridled, following the direction of the rider controlling mouth. Similarly, when our speech is bridled, the rest of our body is able to be bridled as well.
    - b) The large ship has a small rudder and just by controlling it someone can direct the ship wherever they want.
    - c) Observations from both illustrations:
      1. In both cases there are strong contrary forces. The mighty horse and the strong winds both stand to direct the individual riding on the horse or in the ship unless they have control over the respective small items. By controlling something small the horse and the ship can be under the control of an individual despite the contrary forces of the will of the horse and the strength of the wind. Similarly, in controlling the tongue, the whole body is able to be bridled as well despite the contrary forces of our own fleshly desires for sin so long as we maintain control.
      2. Additionally, it takes constant attention to the bit and rudder to avert disaster. If attention to control of the horse or ship is relinquished, even for short time, disaster can strike. The horse will take over or the strong winds can cause shipwreck. Similarly, if we let our guard down, the tongue can also wreak havoc.
    - 3) How can this be the case for us, that controlling speech can enable us to control everything else?
      - a) The tongue is this important because it directly reveals the heart. Matthew 12:34 “*...the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*”
      - b) Without any real thought at all the tongue can instantly reveal the inward reality of our heart. What other member of the body reacts as quickly as the tongue revealing the heart? If one is able to control this direct link that, in a split second, can disclose all manner of evil conceived from within, they are surely capable of controlling the rest of their actions which take more planning in carrying out the desires of the heart. It is a greater/lesser argument; surely if we can bridle the tongue (greater difficulty) we can bridle the rest of the body (less difficulty).
      - c) As Christians, it is demanded that we forfeit our will for Christ’s (cf. Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:1-2). The tongue is quick to reveal if our will

<sup>5</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), 5046. *τέλειος*.

(the contrary force) or Christ's will is the guide for our lives. When our speech is controlled, it is evidence that Christ truly is the Lord and Master in our heart. When this is the case, the whole body is able to be bridled in subjection. This is a question of the reality of Christ's Lordship! No wonder James writes, "*If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless*" (1:26).

B. Power is seen in the destructive implications of the uncontrolled tongue (James 3:5-12).

1. Its destructive nature is seen in that it can destroy the whole body, James 3:5-6 "*So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set afire by such a small fire!*<sup>6</sup> *And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.*"  
  - a. The uncontrolled tongue is described with vivid imagery. It is "the very world of iniquity," it defiles "the entire body," it sets the course of our life on fire by the fires of hell! The tongue is small, just like a small fire, but just as this small fire can set afire and destroy a great forest, the tongue can boast of its great destructive impact.
  - b. Think of the destructive impact of the uncontrolled tongue on the individual.
    - 1) The uncontrolled tongue can destroy our reputation! We may have a wealth of knowledge and be able to serve God in many ways, but the damage our tongue does, can brand us forever, destroying all of our influence. This is especially relevant for teachers that rely on influence.
    - 2) The uncontrolled tongue can isolate us from loved ones! Words spoken can lead to feuds that last years. These ongoing feuds are, of course, sinful themselves, but that is the point. The tongue lit the fire to more and more sin.
    - 3) The uncontrolled tongue can ultimately send us to hell! In addition to the havoc it can wreak our life on this earth; the uncontrolled tongue will wreak havoc on our eternal condition.
  - c. Think of the impact of the uncontrolled tongue on others.
    - 1) The uncontrolled tongue can destroy the reputation of others. Gossip and lies regarding others can ruin their reputation.
    - 2) The uncontrolled tongue can destroy the relationships of others.
      - a) It can destroy churches by leading to strife and division.
      - b) It can destroy nations by leading to wars fought because of hatred expressed by the tongue or propaganda employed by the tongue.
    - 3) The uncontrolled tongue can ultimately cause others to go to hell through false teaching or through words that cause others to stumble.
  - d. More broadly, it is a challenge, really, to think of any evil that cannot be aided or set in motion by the uncontrolled tongue. Lenski notes, "It utters every wrong emotion and thought and puts every kind of a wrong deed into words...no other member is like it or can be compared to it for range of evil influence."<sup>6</sup>
2. Its destructive nature is seen in that it is said to be untamable. James 3:7-8 "*For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.*<sup>8</sup> *But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*"  
  - a. Some might see a problem here. James 1:26 tells us that if think we are religious and do not "bridle" our tongue, our religion is worthless yet, here, we are told that it cannot be "tamed."

<sup>6</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Epistle of James*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 605

- 1) Some say, the tongue cannot be tamed but it can be controlled. They draw a distinction between the words “tame” and “control/bridle.” They say a tame animal does not need the constant bridling and attention, which is always necessary for the tongue, so it cannot be tamed in that sense but it can be controlled like a horse or ship.
  - a) This seems to make sense in that there are different words translated “bridle” and “tame.” The word for “bridle” appearing only in James 3:2  
“... able to bridle the whole body as well,” and James 1:26.
  - b) However, other than in James 3:7-8, the only other time the word for “tame” is used in the New Testament, is in Mark 5 describing the attempts to restrain the Gerasene demoniac where verse 4 states, “...the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.” “Subdue” here does not seem like the kind of word indicating tame in the sense of not needing restraint. It appears more like a synonym for bridle. No one was strong enough to gain control of him. Therefore, this interpretation is not without its problems. Still, James does make a distinction with the two words.
- 2) Others, like Augustine, one of the early church fathers, say it is impossible to tame the tongue without God.
  - a) Augustine writes, “For he does not say: ‘None can tame the tongue;’ but ‘*No man*;’ in order that, when it is tamed, we may acknowledge it to be effected by the mercy of God, the help of God, the grace of God. The soul, therefore, should endeavour to tame the tongue, and while endeavouring should pray for assistance... Thus, we are warned by the precept to do this,—namely, to make the attempt, and, failing in our own strength, to pray for the help of God.”<sup>7</sup>
  - b) David prayed for God to act in a similar way, Psalm 141:3 “*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.*”
  - c) Certainly God will not directly control our tongue against our free will, but with the aid of strength from His word, and His Lordship coming alive in our heart, in a sense, we allow Him to control the tongue. We are not able to stop the destructive influence of the tongue without Him. We need God and His word changing our heart. That much is certain.
- 3) Either way, the tongue is never tamed in the sense that it can be without any restraint AND we need God’s help to control it in the ways we are told that we must in 1:26.
  - b. “*The tongue is a restless evil full of deadly poison.*”
  - 1) The terms “restless evil” really indicates an unstable evil. The tongue is unstable and volatile. This word is also only used by James in the New Testament and only here and 1:8 indicating the “double-minded man unstable in all of his ways.” This makes a lot of sense in light of the following section talking about the evils of the inconsistency and instability of the tongue.
  - 2) The terms “deadly poison” are straight forward. A deadly poison is destructive, just like the fire is, except that it is more covert. It may not appear to be so destructive at first glance, but the result is just as deadly. Additionally, poison is a pollutant. When mixed with something pure the whole thing becomes destructive which is in keeping with the following section as well where blessing is polluted by cursing.
3. The tongue’s destructive nature is seen in its polluting inconsistency! James 3:9–12  
“*With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made*

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<sup>7</sup> Augustine of Hippo, “A Treatise on Nature and Grace”, trans. Peter Holmes, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, Volume V: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings* (ed. Philip Schaff; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 126.

*in the likeness of God; <sup>10</sup> from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. <sup>11</sup> Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.”*

- a. Peter Davids notes, “The issue is that the tongue is used for incompatible activities: on the one hand, it is very religious, but, on the other, it can be most profane in daily life.”<sup>8</sup> This profanity is a “deadly poison,” and “unstable.” In one breath we can extol the virtues of the Creator and in the next breath viciously malign His creation, man, made in His own likeness. There is no curse or evil spoken of others that is not also reflected upon the One who created him. This was not a foreign concept. “In James’s day the king or emperor would set up his statue...If anyone insulted or cursed the statue, they were treated as if they had cursed the emperor to his face, for the statue was the image of the emperor.”<sup>9</sup> It is no different for God and man made in His likeness. This is why it is inconsistent and evil.
- b. James gives some examples in nature to show how this inconsistency in the tongue is not natural.
  - 1) A fountain does not, from the same opening, send fresh and bitter water, a fig tree does not produce olives nor does a vine produce figs, nor can salt water produce fresh. It is unnatural!
  - 2) The passage says it “ought not be this way.” The heart that has Christ as its master ought to produce fruit in keeping with being a slave to Christ. When the tongue is out of control and cursing man in one breath and blessing God in another, it is not following the natural order of what must come from a heart that has Christ as Lord.

### C. Applications for the power of the tongue –

- 1. Teachers – Because of the power of the tongue, and the influence that teaching carries, if you desire to become a teacher you must be mature in word.
  - a. This means you must be mature, not prone to stumbling, in doctrine.
    - 1) Paul instructed the teacher Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*” If you desire to be a teacher, you must be one who understands this responsibility and makes it an obsession to accurately handle the word of truth.
    - 2) Teachers must possess wisdom from above (3:13-18) and strive for mastery of what James spoke of in 1:19-26. Be quick to hear the word, slow to speak it, and slow to wrath concerning it. Put aside all filthiness and remains of wickedness and in humility receive the word implanted and be a doer and speaker of it.
  - b. This also means that you are mature, not prone to stumbling, in speech in general. With the help of God’s word to train your heart, and constant attention, keep your tongue bridled and let it manifest the reality of Christ’s Lordship in your heart. If Christ is not truly Lord in your heart, DO NOT TEACH!
- 2. Everyone – We all must recognize the power of the tongue and the impact that it has.
  - a. The tongue can do incredible damage if we do not bridle it, supplying constant attention. We must be sure that our tongue is an instrument that builds others up, shows others Christ, and ultimately gives God glory! If we use our tongue to tear others down we are destructively flinging around fire and spreading deadly poison, and bring a curse to God!

<sup>8</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 145.

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Jas 3:1-12.

- b. Everyone proclaiming Christ as Lord should have speech reflecting that Christ is the Master and director of their life. We all must prayerfully strive to avoid the evil and destructive inconsistencies of the unbridled tongue.
- c. All of us can use the tongue to test where our heart truly is. It is the quickest revealer of the heart. Do you think you are mature? Examine your speech! If it is filled with profanity, lies, gossip, unkind words, etc., it is evidence of the immaturity and corruption within the heart. If you find yourself weak in these areas, Christ's role in your heart is where to begin and give your speech the attention it deserves.

### III. Lesson 3 – We Must Strive to Attain Wisdom from Above! (James 3:13-18)

- A. Who is James addressing? James 3:13 “*Who among you is wise and understanding...*” James could be asking generally or he could still be addressing teachers, and those considering teaching. Commentators argue both ways. In either case James is discussing attributes of wisdom that should be in everyone and most assuredly should be present in those that take on teaching.
- B. How to detect wisdom from above, James 3:13 “*...Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.*”
  - 1. True wisdom is detected by good behavior done in the gentleness of wisdom.
  - 2. The word for gentleness is the same word translated “humility” in James 1:21 for the attitude that we must have when receiving “the word implanted which is able to save our souls.” The NASB95 translates it in various passages “gentleness,” “humility,” “meekness,” and having “consideration” for all men (Titus 3:2). It carries the idea of being under control which is a contrast to the unstable tongue. In James, this word “...refers to a meek and humble readiness to be taught by the Word of God without flaring up against the teacher...It is demonstrated in the whole walk of the righteous and stands in pleasing contrast to bitter zeal and contentiousness.”<sup>10</sup> It is the opposite of arrogance and selfishness.
  - 3. The life a person lives is the key for detecting wisdom from above. This is truly how one will be known wise and apt to teach. Barclay summarizes James' point like this: “Is there any of you who wishes to be a real sage and a real teacher? Then let him live a life of such beautiful graciousness that he will prove to all that gentleness is enthroned as the controlling power within his heart.”<sup>11</sup>
  - 4. True wisdom is detected through a life lived in gentleness.
- C. How to define true wisdom (3:14-18)
  - 1. True wisdom is defined by what it is not: worldly wisdom, James 3:14-16 “*But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*<sup>15</sup> *This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.*<sup>16</sup> *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*”
  - a. Worldly wisdom is improperly motivated (v14).
    - 1) It is motivated by bitter jealousy – The word “bitter” used here is the same word used in verse 11 describing the opposite of drinkable water. Here it describes the word ζῆλον which literally means “zeal.” ζῆλον can be positive or negative meaning “expressing active enthusiasm, ardent affection, keen interest *zeal*,

<sup>10</sup> F. Hauck and S. Schulz, vol. 6, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Gerhard Kittel et al.; electronic ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 650.

<sup>11</sup> *The Letters of James and Peter* (ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow; The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000), 91.

*ardor, jealousy.*<sup>12</sup> The coupling of this word with “bitter” adequately conveys the idea of jealousy, misplaced zeal.

- 2) It is motivated by selfish ambition – This mindset is one where the person is only interested in themselves and their own personal gain.<sup>13</sup> This word is used in other ancient writings describing an attempt to gain a political office through inequitable means, and indicating a rivalry, “party spirit.”<sup>14</sup> This has no place in the church! Every time it is translated in NASB95 it is translated as “selfish,” “selfishly,” “selfishness,” or “disputes.” This is the opposite of the *gentle wisdom* that should characterize the teacher.
- 3) He says if this exists in your heart “do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.” The word translated “be arrogant” comes from a Greek word meaning to “boast or rejoice against.”<sup>15</sup> It is used in a positive sense in James 2:13 about how mercy “triumphs over” judgment. Similarly, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition can “triumph over” the spreading of the truth if present in the teacher. Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition contradict and suppress the truth.

b. Worldly wisdom is described as...(v15)

- 1) “Earthly” literally means “from earth.” It is the opposite of things pertaining to heaven.<sup>16</sup> (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1 and John 3:12).
- 2) “Sensual/Natural” is from the word meaning “...soul, the part of the immaterial life held in common with the animals, as contrasted with spirit... only in man... Natural, pertaining to the natural as distinguished from the spiritual or glorified nature of man”<sup>17</sup> (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:44).
- 3) “Demonic” speaks to the source of the wisdom, reminiscent of the tongues fire being from fires of hell (3:6). It is “resembling or proceeding from an evil spirit, demon-like.”<sup>18</sup> This is in contrast to godly.
- 4) The point is this self-seeking, self-interested wisdom is far from spiritual and far from God’s will!

c. Worldly wisdom’s fruit (v16) – “*For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*” Worldly wisdom cannot be expected to bring godliness to fruition. As the passage shows, the result of this kind of heart is disorder or instability, and every evil thing. That is very strong language. All evil can come to fruition from this ungodly mentality. This kind of wisdom has no business in the life of any Christian, let alone teachers.

2. True wisdom is defined as wisdom from above. James 3:17-18 “*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*”

a. True wisdom is properly motivated with an attitude gentleness/humility (v13).

b. True wisdom is described as...

- 1) “First pure” indicates “Freedom from defilements or impurities... Innocent, pure, blameless...”<sup>19</sup> It is similar to the word holy. The NASB95 translates it “innocent,” “pure,” “free from sin,” and “chaste” in the 8 times it appears in the New Testament. Wisdom from above is first pure, having no hidden agenda, no

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Friberg et al., vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, (Baker’s Greek New Testament library, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 185.

<sup>13</sup> J.J. Turner, *The Book of James: Let the Bible Speak Study Series*, (West Monroe, La: William C. Johnson, Inc., 1976), 108.

<sup>14</sup> Davids, *Epistle of James*, 151.

<sup>15</sup> Zodhiates, *Word Study*. 2620. κατακανχάομαι

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 1919. ἐ πίγειος

<sup>17</sup> Zodhiates, *Word Study*, 5591. ψυχικός

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Zodhiates, *Word Study*, 53. ἀ γνός

ulterior motive, or hint of selfishness. It seeks truth and strives to serve God and others in humility.

- 2) “Peaceable” denotes wisdom from above, true wisdom, is disposed to peace.<sup>20</sup>
- 3) “Gentle” is “Fitting, appropriate, suitable, proper, to be lenient, yielding...”<sup>21</sup> Its 5 New Testament occurrences are all translated “gentle” in the NASB95.
- 4) “Willing to yield/Reasonable” only appears here in the New Testament and means “easily persuaded,” “compliant,” the opposite of “insubordinate,” “unruly,” “disobedient.”<sup>22</sup> This person is “ready to obey.”<sup>23</sup> The ESV translates this word “open to reason.” The idea is the wise man is ready and willing to comply with scripture, or willing to hear the ideas of others and comply. True wisdom is not stuck in its own way of doing things.
- 5) “Full of mercy and good fruits” –
  - a) Mercy “is the outward manifestation of pity.”<sup>24</sup> Wisdom from above shows compassion. When the wise person sees a need they try to fill it.
  - b) “Good fruits” is coupled with mercy because they are the manifestation of being full of mercy. This echoes the ideas seen in the “faith and works” discussion in James 2, and the care of orphans and widows in 1:27.
- 6) “Without partiality/Unwavering” only appears here in the New Testament and literally means “not to be parted” and can indicate “without uncertainty/indecision,” or “without partiality.”<sup>25</sup> Scholars are split on if the passage indicates “impartial” or “unwavering.”<sup>26</sup> In either case, the both attributes are in keeping with true wisdom (cf. 2:4, 9; 3:10,11).
- 7) “Without hypocrisy” “...came to mean one without...pretense...genuine, real, true, sincere...”<sup>27</sup>
- c. The fruit of true wisdom: James 3:18 “*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*” The fruit or product of wisdom from above is righteousness. The ESV translates this verse “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Righteousness comes from those out spreading peace in a peaceful, gentle way. This is contrasted with the “disorder and every evil thing” produced jealousy and selfish ambition that motivate worldly wisdom.

D. Applications regarding wisdom from above –

1. Whether a teacher or not, the wisdom we must all strive for is from above and for us it must start with the attitude of heart! We all must shun selfish ambition and jealousy, and put on humility! Without this our pursuit of wisdom will be fruitless.
2. Whether a teacher or not, we all must also strive to embody all the traits befitting wisdom from above.
3. Evaluate yourself in these ways. Do you think you are wise? Test yourself by these standards, and work toward completion, especially if you aspire to teach.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1516. εἰ ρητικός

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1933. ἐ πιεικής

<sup>22</sup> Zodhiates, *Word Study*.

<sup>23</sup> W. E. Vine et al., vol. 2, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 331.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 403-04.

<sup>25</sup> Vine, *Expository*, 460.

<sup>26</sup> Davids, *Epistle of James*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> Zodhiates, *Word Study*, 505. ἀ νυπόκριτος

In conclusion, after examining the stricter judgment for teachers, the power of the tongue, and how we all must strive to attain wisdom from above, we can see that James 3 holds valuable lessons for all of us. Prayerfully consider these truths and examine your heart by checking your motivations for teaching if you are a teacher, examining your speech and the condition it reveals concerning your heart, and determine to pursue wisdom from above with an attitude of gentleness.

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## James: Chapter 4, Dan Mayfield

“The Right Thing to Do to be Truly Blessed”

- A. James 4 ends by saying, “*Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin*”, Jas 4:17
- B. In chapter four, James describes Christians who are carnal, proud, unloving and presumptuous and as a result are unhappy, divisive, obnoxious, and judgmental hypocrites.
- C. They are sinners in danger of falling away from God’s grace.
- D. Therefore James 4 is a call to repent by pointing out the following:
  - A sense of Peace and contentment that accompanies wisdom from above is impossible to have unless Christians put aside carnal pursuits.
  - The blessing of God’s “Greater Grace” is only possible for Christians who humbly draw near to Him. To realize God’s saving grace we must resist the devil and sin.
  - The hope of Mercy in Judgment is possible only if Christians Love their neighbors.
  - The path to being Prosperous comes always by first considering the will of God.

### I. Finding Peace: the Right Way to Get Peace in our Lives, James 4:1-5

- A. *“1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’?” Jas 4:1-5*
- B. We need peace in our very being.
  1. But being carnal-minded has made real peace an elusive thing.
  2. Embracing the world and has ushered into their lives all sorts of trouble.
  3. The wisdom of the world...
    - a. Jas 3:14-16 “*14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*”
    4. The mind of the flesh....”*your pleasures that wage war in your members*”....lust, envy,
    5. They love the things of this world, 1 Jn 2:15ff
    6. Paul said, “*the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,*” Rom. 8:6.
    7. They have no semblance of peace in their lives.
- C. We need to be at peace with our Brethren.
  1. They are warring with one another.
  2. They are not peacemakers, Jas 3:18: “*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*” They are the opposite of peacemakers.
  3. And they don’t have peace with all the quarrels and conflicts, fighting and murdering.
  4. Every meaningful relationship is sacrificed on the altar of lustful desires.
- D. We need to be at peace with God.

1. V5, “*He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?*”  
a. God truly reveals His heart but they don’t care.
2. Don’t make prayer just another tool, a utility, a last resort to get things for the flesh.  
a. He said to them, “*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures*”, vs.3  
b. God will accept our prayers when our motives are right.
3. “Friendship with the world” is a type of peace they seek.  
a. It is spiritual adultery.  
b. They are friends with the world while they are hostile towards God and towards God’s people.  
c. What will a man give in exchange for his soul, in exchange for peace with God!
4. Their carnal wisdom has made them useless as peacemakers: “*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*” Jas 3:18.
- E. James is a book of “doing” faith.
  1. 4:17 says, “*the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*”
  2. The right thing in James 4 is to stop following the flesh in order to have the lasting peace of God.
  3. Let us not trade real peace from God for a momentary friendship with the world.

II. Receiving Grace: the Right Way to Receive Grace, James 4:6-10

- A. “*6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*” Jas 4:6-10
- B. We need God’s saving grace.
- C. Friendship with the world has robbed them of peace and now pride jeopardizes the ability to approach God.
  1. “*God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.*”  
a. “*God is not mocked for whatever a man sows, this shall he also reap*”, Gal. 6:7.  
“Sowing” the world, they cannot hope to have God’s amazing grace.
  2. The proud and haughty do not engender grace; they think they don’t need it, they exalt themselves above grace.
  3. Pride is Satan’s tool which won’t submit. Their pursuit of lusts, of the flesh, has made them draw near to Satan, to resist God.
  4. Turns out that not only are they opposed to God, but God is opposed to them!
- D. “*But He gives a greater grace...*” This joy, this happiness of salvation can be in their lives if they do the right things.
  1. To the humble – Gr. *tapeinos*, pictures someone whose face is to the ground, contrite, lowly.
  2. To the submissive – Gr. *hupotasso*, to subordinate oneself, put oneself in subjection to.
  3. To resist Satan – Gr. *anthistaymee*, to set oneself against, to oppose, to withstand.
  4. To draw near – Gr. *engizo*, to approach, to join one thing to another.
    - a. The Psalmist said, “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*” Ps 51:17
  5. “*Cleanse your hands you sinners...*” and turn away from sin. Weep and mourn over the sin in your life.
- E. The right thing to do is to humble ourselves before Him and repent of sin.
  1. The carnal mind that’s guided by earthly and demonic wisdom will not do this. The prideful will be humiliated.
  2. Those who draw near to God with a humble heart will be exalted and given saving grace.

### III. Mercy: Judge Right so as to Receive God's Mercy, James 4:11-12

- A. *"11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" Jas 4:11,12*
- B. Sinful men need God's love and mercy on the Day of Judgment.
- C. Hypocritical Judging of others means they have broken the 2<sup>nd</sup> great command, the royal law.
  - 1. When we are standing before God on the Day of Judgment, how do we wish to be judged by God?
  - 2. James indicates there's a real problem of self-righteousness and prejudice.
  - 3. Ch 2:1 *"the attitude of personal favoritism"*
  - 4. Ch 2:2-4 *"judges with evil motives"*
  - 5. Ch 2:8 instead of following the royal law of *"love your neighbor"*, they *"judge thy neighbor"*.
  - 6. Evil judges do not love but only see the faults in others.
- D. Judge yourself first.
  - 1. Does it appear judgment will be merciful to these?
  - 2. James warns, *"For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."* Jas 2:13
  - 3. Jesus said, *"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."* Mt 7:2
  - 4. Judge yourself first, Matthew 7, *"first take the log from your own eye..."*
- E. The right thing to do.
  - 1. In regard to their own lives, they were not doers of God's law.
    - a. They became judges of the law instead of doers of God's law.
    - b. Keep God's commands because anything else is sin.
  - 2. In regard to their Brethren, they were not following the royal law to love thy neighbor.
    - a. Jas 2:8 in context of being evil judges of others: *"In regard to their own lives, they were not doers of God's law."*
    - b. Don't turn "Love thy neighbor" into "judge thy neighbor" and break the "royal law", Jas 2:8.
    - c. Remember the second great commandment to love their neighbor as themselves.
  - 3. Be a doer of God's law while practicing the royal law to love others. This is the way to judge others so that we receive God's mercy in the judgment.

### IV. Prosperity: the Right Way to Prosper, James 4:13-16

- A. *"13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."* Jas 4:13-16
- B. It is in our nature to build things; to grow things; to produce and earn a living.
- C. There is no lasting prosperity until we take into consideration God's will: *"Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'*
  - 1. They were seeking prosperity without God. James 5:3 says, *"Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!"*
  - 2. They make plans, but they should say, *"If the Lord wills."*
  - 3. We have already seen that "lusts" and "pleasures" are destroying their relationships AND we've seen even their prayers are tainted with their worldly requests and God isn't answering.

4. They have been unwise: "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" Mt 16:26
- D. When we care about the will of God, we keep things in perspective.
  1. We don't become blinded by lusts and forget that life is short and uncertain.
    - a. "*Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.*"
  2. The unwise carnal mind loses sight of the big picture. The forest is eternal life and heavenly, but some become interested more in the tree, getting the tree, scratching, clawing, fighting for the tree; quarreling, murdering, deceiving, cheating, stealing, judging, and just about anything to get the tree.
  3. The will of God gives perspective so that we prosper the right way even in business.
- E. Boastful Pride is the problem. When we care for the will of God, we stop boasting.
  1. "*But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*" v16.
    - a. Humility does not misuse the tongue to say, "Come now, you who say, '*Today or tomorrow we will go....*'"
    - b. They sin with their tongues; are presumptuous and worldly; arrogant and boastful.
  2. With God's will, we will prosper. "*Whatever a man sows, this shall he reap.*"
  3. And don't forget that without God, we will miss the eternal riches.
- F. The right way to prosper is by seeking God's will in our labors.

#### V. Conclusion

- A. Life is full of pursuits and it matters to God what they are and it matters what we are willing to do to get them. James writes to Christians who are still pursuing the old life
- B. James 4 emphasizes the way to get the basic things of life: peace, grace, mercy, and material blessings.
- C. Knowing the right thing to do means....
  1. Putting aside the carnal pursuits of the world and drawing near to God in humility;
  2. Practice the royal law with others and keep the God's commandments yourself.
  3. Considering God's will in all of our endeavors because anything else is vanity.
  4. To do anything else is sin, Jas 4:17.



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## James: Chapter 5, Zackary Opheim

**Text - James 5:1-6** Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure. Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

- a. In chapter one of this epistle James began to break down the way in which we value our present life based upon our temporary social or physical circumstances when he said “But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation,”
- b. In chapter five James now shatters the illusion that that money and worldly power is a permanent solution to well-being. James is reminding Christians of something that Jesus told them from the beginning of his ministry: that...

I. **No matter how rich or powerful they may be right now, the wicked will not win in God's world.**

- A. He does this by completely reversing the expectations which the world has instilled in us from the time we are young,
  - 1. Our culture absorbs these expectations as we see them on MTV and in Hollywood movies and on the news channels and the cities in which we live
  - 2. The expectation is that money and power can make people happy and give them security, regardless of whether they love Christ or whether they hate Him and what He stands for.
  - 3. Do you ever remember wanting to be rich as a young person? I do; I vividly remember thinking as a teenager that if I got enough money and invested it well enough I could live a life of *hedonism*, and I would be happy. At that time in my life I was still in my sins, and it bothers me still today that I, like so many people, had a future laid up for me of misery without hope.
    - i. We see the people who are rich and famous, from Hollywood celebrities to politicians to world leaders, who do not value what God values. Academia in the Western world is doing everything it can right now to denigrate Christ and keep His name as far out of the public sphere as possible unless it's used as a derogatory term, we've got politicians and intellectuals who want to teach the creation story for atheism to your children and explain to them that they may very well be homosexuals. Murder clinics like Planned Parenthood are slowly winning the PR battle and building more clinics. More than 1/3 of the world's population now lives in places where the free practice of Christianity is illegal, and yet you see the leaders of these countries in photos with smiling faces. Try as you may to stop it, they are making headway.
- B. But James has an inspired message for us: **they won't win.**

1. James is saying: ‘do you know what all of those riches and all of that power amount to for these wicked people?’
  - a. They are “rotted”
  - b. They are “Moth-eaten”
  - c. They are “Rust”ed
2. People are getting their security not from the promises of God but from temporary things that wear out and eventually look like garbage!
3. For those who get their security from riches and not from God (the wicked), know that ‘in the end those riches will not only be useless for your eternal well being, but they will actually testify against you in the presence of God.’

C. Who exactly are the rich that James is condemning?

1. The rich here are not Christians.
  - a. Their end will be “miseries,” their flesh will be consumed “with fire,” they will be the victims in a “day of slaughter.” These people will not be in heaven.
  - b. Rather these are the rich mentioned in 2:6-7 who persecute Christians and blaspheme the name of Christ: **“Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?”**
  - c. James has in view a wicked group of people whom he is characterizing by that which gave them their greatest security and which was an element that likely caused them to feel vindicated in their activities: *their wealth*.
2. The Bible is not anti-wealth or anti-property.
  - a. Proverbs 10:22 **It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.**
  - b. 1 Chronicles 29:12 **“Both riches and honor come from You [God], and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.”**
3. Rather it is the wrong use of and attitude toward wealth that scripture repeatedly and emphatically warns against.
  - a. 1 Tim. 6:10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**
4. The New Testament specifically addresses what a Christians who have more money than they need should believe and do:
  - a. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 **Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.**
5. There are very righteous and selfless and generous people who have great wealth and there are very wicked and selfish and greedy stingy people who have little or no money, And vice versa.

D. There seems to be one main reason James addresses this warning to the rich:

1. James is not really addressing the rich persecutors who will not likely read his epistle, and he is not really writing against money. *James is giving this warning as a comfort to Christians who have been suffering at the hand of the rich and influential: the elite of Jewish society.*
  - a. It is likely that many among James’ audience were questioning the value of their newfound Christian faith, seeing that their lands and freedom was being taken as well as some of their lives.
  - b. James is saying, ‘it may look like they have all the power and you’re on the wrong side, but God is going to turn the tables on them.’
  - c. But here’s the message: **they won’t win.**

**Text: James 5:7-11** Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

- a. We know the devil is going to lose. The devil even knows that:
- b. Rev. 12:12 "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time."

## **II. Until the day of Christ's return, Christians need to 'dig in their heels'**

- A. We need patience.
  - 1. Which means to be "long-suffering" or "long-souled"
  - 2. James compares this Christian battle to a farmer waiting for his precious produce. In Palestine wheat is planted in the fall and harvested in spring. And in about October they get their early rains. Later in March through April come the latter rains which bring the barley and wheat to that point when the fields are white for harvest.
  - 3. Sometimes those rains came a little early or a little late.
  - 4. I am an onion farmer (a wannabe) who is getting a taste of this need for patience needed for the harvest. Unlike the common method of buying pre-grown bulbs in the stores, this year I started them from seed indoors this January. After 2 months they're still not much wider than toothpicks. They grow so slow! And they've got to be planted when the weather's right, and I have to wean them off of the indoor lights and slowly introduce them to pure sunlight, and they need to be well weeded and watered throughout the season for a good harvest.
    - a. There is anticipation in this wait and there is tension in it.
  - 5. We need patience
- B. This is especially so since we live in a culture that treats Christ and His church like going to the shopping mall.
  - 1. I have a friend who quit going to church altogether because the church got rid of a minister that his family really liked.
    - a. He told me that "turned him off to church" and now he is drifting.
    - b. Satan will use outright physical persecution when he's able to, but if he can get you to give up on Christ because of the color of the curtains at church he'll use that too!
    - c. Preachers, Satan will use someone's criticism to get you to give up on Christ. And he wants you to retaliate in anger, and he wants you to treat people the way they treat you rather than the way you want to be treated. So you need to dig in your heels and...
  - 2. 5:8 "strengthen your hearts"
    - a. Make up your mind now and beforehand that you will stand firm.
      - 1) "Because the Lord is near," "he's right at the door"
        - a) We often hear of theories regarding which governments need to align and which nuclear wars need to happen before Christ will return.
        - b) James is one of many NT books which let us know that the coming of Christ is imminent.
        - c) There is nothing stopping him from interrupting this message right now!
    - 3. Since our Lord is standing at the door, do we want him to come in as we're moaning and groaning about our brothers and sisters in Christ?
      - a. 5:9 "Do not complain, brethren against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged"

- b. Of all the nasty and terrible work that the enemy is currently doing in our world, and of all the good qualities that God has brought about in the Christians we know, we spend a dangerous amount of time complaining against our brethren.
  - 1) An older minister once told me about his first weeks working with a certain congregation. He said that during those first few weeks getting to know the congregation, eating dinners at various members' houses, as he went from house to house he had heard every shortcoming and embarrassing character flaw imaginable about all of the other members. Finally, during one such dinner as one member was candidly enumerating the shortcomings of another member who was not present, the older minister told the host flatly, "I don't want to hear any more about what he did!"
  - 2) There is a difference between complaining against a brother and prayerfully helping a brother to remove a speck from his eye. The complainer will feel shame in the presence of Christ while the soul winner brings glory to Christ.

**Text - James 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.**

- a. This passage likely connects with the previous discussion of patience under suffering. Times when people are under the greatest duress are also times when people say the most regrettable things. Therefore:

### **III. While doing the right thing, don't say the wrong thing.**

- A. For example, under great stress people often make foolish vows:
  - 1. 'if we make it through this alive, I swear on my mother's grave I'll marry you!'
  - 2. 'Lord, If you get me through this one, I'll never go hunting again!'
  - 3. 'If you help me on this one I swear I'll: fill in the blank!'
  - 4. Recall Jephthah's foolish vow as he set off for battle: "Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31)
    - a. Even though Jephthah went on to achieve great military victory, his foolish and unnecessary vow ended up in tragic killing (murder?) of his daughter.
- B. This is not a prohibition against solemn oaths, vows, etc. such as in weddings or before the court.
  - 1. Jesus made his great confession under solemn oath in the presence of the High Priest .
  - 2. Mt. 26:63-64 "And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself;"
- C. Jesus' concern with oaths is that no matter what kind of promise we make to God, whether it's a "hope to die" kind of promise or whether our fingers are crossed behind our back, what we say we will do we should do.
  - 1. The problem is that the more we vow, the more we fail to keep our vows.
  - 2. If we always spoke the truth then we would have little need of such a thing as an oath.
  - 3. God's will is this: that whether we are relaxing on the beach or whether we are falling from the sky with a broken parachute, God's people ought to say what they mean and mean what they say!
  - 4. As the saying goes: 'always under promise and over perform.'

**Text: James 5:13-18 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;**

**15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.**

- a. While James has bound us all together in the church of Christ as a group of people patiently awaiting the Lord's return, or as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), yet in every church in every place we have people going through differing circumstances in their individual lives.
- b. We have young people looking toward marriage and families. We have people grieving the loss of health and loved ones. We have converts whose families don't accept their new faith in Christ. We have people who are still shaking off old temptations from the world. And we've got people who have fallen away.

#### **IV. We need to respond to each life situation as people who are waiting for the return of Christ.**

- a. What exactly is the response of faith to each of these life situations, and how do church leaders help people draw near to God in each one of these situations?
- b. James gives some answers to these questions:

**Text - James 5:13 “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.**

- A. The noun for this verb meaning to suffer, *Kakopathei*, was just used in James 5:10 of the suffering of the prophets who were persecuted. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament defines the term further as - "to suffer misfortune," "to be in sorry case."
  - 1. Paul uses this verb to mean persecution brought on as a result of the Christian proclamation specifically
  - 2. **2 Tim. 2:9 “for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal;”**
  - 3. **2 Tim. 4:5 “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering”**
  - 4. Verse 11 likewise applies this term to Job's suffering, which included the loss of family, property, the scorn of friends, as well as physical sickness and mental anguish. Thus, this is a *general word* for suffering that may come either as a result of normal life circumstances or by persecution by people hostile to the Faith.
    - a. **James 5:10-11 “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job**
- B. The challenge when people are suffering is that we often cannot take away the suffering someone else is facing, whether it is physical pain, the loss of a loved one, or religious persecution.
  - 1. We can often visit with people. We can pray for a person. We can sometimes *carefully* help someone to understand when a person has caused his own suffering. Hopefully that person already has a solid Biblical foundation to rejoice when encountering various trials.
- C. Often the very best thing you can do for those suffering in your congregation is to encourage and help them to draw near to God in prayer.
  - 1. There are at least 3 benefits we get from praying:
    - a. Praying may cause God to stop the suffering.
      - 1) **1 Tim. 2:2 Paul said to pray “for kings and all who are in authority that we might pray for kings and all who are in authority, that we might lead a tranquil and quiet life”**
    - b. Praying will give us the wisdom to be able to rejoice in the situation.

- 1) In the beginning of James when he told us to count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials... knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Right after that in James 1:5 he says "**but if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously without reproach, and it will be given him**"
- c. Bringing our troubles to God brings the peace of God.
  - 1) **Phil. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**Text - James 5:13b Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.**

- A. Often it's true that the happiest periods of life are the least productive spiritually.
  1. We've heard the saying, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Sometimes we only spend quality time with God when things aren't going well. We go to him to fix our lives, but then we forget to maintain the relationship once things are fixed.
  2. Solomon encouraged young people to invest in their relationship with God *before* some of the major challenges come later in life: **Ecclesiastes 12:1 'Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"**
- B. What then is a fitting response of faith when we're enjoying the fun things in life like new marriages (and old ones), babies, new jobs, friendships, ice cream, and summer?
  1. A fitting habit is giving credit to God for all things.
    - a. There are lots of ways to do this. James suggests we sing songs of praise.
    - b. Some of you here have spent so much time "teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual song" (Col. 3:16), that you know half of that song book by heart.
    - c. This passage is not just encouraging you to get to church on Sunday and sing. We are being encouraged to take that praise and those songs that you have bouncing around in your heads and carry them with you when you're at home and work and especially in the shower.
  2. A fitting response is *cultivating the habit* of praising God.
    - a. Alexander Campbell's Father, Thomas Campbell, was said to be a very pious man. His discussion with most everyone he talked to consisted almost entirely of some aspect of the gospel almost all the time. After he went blind in his eighties, having gone years without reading scripture himself, he was still able to preach from the scriptures he had memorized as a younger man. Alexander Campbell recounted in his journal how he would often stumble upon his elderly father sitting in a room all alone, unaware that anyone else was present with him, simply praising God out loud for his unspeakable gifts.
    - b. We also find that when we've developed a habit of praise during the happy times the praise will then come much more naturally during the difficult times.

**Text - James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.**

[The question that looms over this controversial passage is whether "sick" means plain old sick, sin sickness, or both. The secondary question is what application it has for us today. Since we don't have enough time to fairly cover each view in detail and yet look at the rest of this chapter of James, and since I am supposed to "speak as one who is speaking the utterances of God," (1 Peter 4:11) let me simply lay out in positive terms what I believe this passage teaches and also what it means for us.]

A. Why “sick” in v. 14 refers primarily if not entirely to physical illness:

1. While the verb for sick, “asthenew,” in verse 14 is translated in the New Testament 13 times as “weakness” of some kind (mostly in Paul’s writings), it is used 18 times to refer to ill people and is one of the main words used to signify plain old sick people in the New Testament.
2. When this verb “asthenew” is clearly used in the sense of some kind of moral weakness in the NT, it is *usually* used along with some qualifier:
  - a. **Romans 14:1 “weak in faith”**
  - b. **1 Cor. 8:12 “by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ”**
  - c. **2 Cor. 11:21-22 “if anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. To my shame I *must* say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself.**
3. When the verb, asthenew, is used in the sense of physical sickness, it is usually used alone.
  - a. **Matthew 10:8 “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”**
  - b. **John 4:7 “The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’”**
  - c. **2 Tim. 4:20 “Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus”**
4. The wording of this passage fits much better with physical sickness. If James intends spiritual sickness in this verse, then he is using physical sickness as a metaphor.
  - a. 5:15a “the prayer offered in faith will **restore** the one who is sick” This is the same word used in **Mark 5:34 “Daughter, your faith has made you well,”** and **Acts 8:9 “he had faith to be made well.”**
  - b. 5:15b “The Lord will raise him up” (5: This same “raise him up” terminology is used when Jesus healed a man in **John 5:8 “Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.’”**
  - c. 5:14 “he must call for the elders of the church.” Calling for the Elders implies that the person is stationary or that the Elders must make a house call. Why would the person need the elders to make a house call if the person were not bedridden?
  - d. Given the wording of the passages, it is no surprise that none of the commonly known translations (and no translation, to my knowledge) render asthenew in James 5:14 as weakness. It is always rendered sick or infirmed.
5. Where there is spiritual sickness or sin sickness, there must also be the presence of sin in some form. James’ use of the conditional, “and *if* he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him,” makes it only a possibility that the sick person has sinned.
6. The sin-sick person is often unaware that he or she is sick and thus is not always able to “call for the Elders.” On the other hand the physically ill person is acutely aware of the illness and is always able to “call for the Elders.” Examples:
  - a. **Rev. 3:1 “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”**
  - b. **Rev. 3:17 “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”**
7. The only New Testament example of the Apostles anointing people with oil clearly pertains to the healing of physical illness.
  - a. **Mark 6:13 “And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.”**
8. It beggars belief that the early church would have accepted this passage as *excluding* physical illness, especially at a time when confirming miracles were in full force.

B. Before we proceed, let's clear up any possible misunderstandings that might throw us off track. We'll start by asking the question: if the sickness is physical, what does this passage not saying to us?

1. This passage does not mean that we have magic oil.
  - a. This is not "Extreme Unction"
  - b. James 5:15 says "the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick"; not the oil.
  - c. Like many other signals that accompanied healings, the oil was symbolic, possibly having two meanings:
    - 1) Medicinal – **Luke 10:33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them"**
    - 2) Ceremonial – **1 Sam 10:1 Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"**
  - d. Thus, it is likely the oil intends to symbolize healing and/or the Lord's blessing.
2. This passage does not necessarily promise a miracle.
  - a. A miracle is when God works in a way that obviously defies the normal laws of nature so that there is no other option for witnesses but to accept that an act of God has occurred.
    - 1) Do you remember the passenger plane that crash landed in the Hudson river recently? People were calling it the "Miracle on the Hudson." God very well may have intervened in that plane accident supernaturally and powerfully; maybe it was someone's prayer that moved Him to do so; however, that is not what the Bible refers to as a miracle, because it is not a sign that causes us to wonder and which verifies God's work beyond any doubt.
    - 2) What occurred in **Acts 3:6** is a miracle: "**But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.**"
    - 3) **Acts 4:16 "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."**
  - b. We know miracles existed powerfully for the purpose of confirming the Gospel message in the first century:
    - 1) **Hebrews 2:3-4 "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."**
    - 2) We know from the practice of our faith today, and from the testimony of scripture that the sign gifts passed away ended with the Apostolic age (1 Cor. 13:6ff).
    - c. Yet we also know that God works powerfully today, and healing someone's illness by whatever means He chooses does not mean that God is resurrecting the sign gifts, nor should it scare us from interpreting this passage according to its plainest meaning.
  3. This passage does not make any stronger promise regarding prayer than many other passages that deal with the power of prayer. This passage is advocating no higher view of prayer than what we should have when we pray in church or at home.
    - a. **Mt. 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."**

- b. Mt. 21:21-22 “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. “And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”
- c. Jesus’ teaching on prayer is every bit as absolute as James’ statement.
- d. If we do not accept that James 5:14 reflects on the power of prayer for physical illnesses for us today *simply because the promise of healing seems to be too absolute to apply to an age when the sign gifts have passed away*, then neither should we accept the things which Jesus said about prayer as applying to us, because what Jesus said was much stronger, broader, and absolute than what James said. Burton Coffman who, believing the sick in James 5:14 to be physically sick people, yet dismissing the application of this passage as belonging only to the miraculous age, said in his Matthew commentary regarding Jesus’ Mt. 21:21 statement, “we do not dare limit this promise.” I agree with Coffman’s statement, though I believe we should extend it to James 5:14.
- e. Even so, scripture also reveals that the great access which we have to the Almighty, even the power that moves mountains, is subject to the following:
  - 1) Effective prayer requires full faith. **Matthew 17:19-20** “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith.’”
  - 2) Effective prayer requires the right motives. **James 4:3** “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”
  - 3) Effective prayer sometimes requires persistence. **Luke 18:1, 7-8** “Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.... ‘now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?’”
  - 4) Effective prayer is always in agreement with God’s will. **1 John 5:14-15** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us *in whatever we ask*, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
    - a) Thus, in any number of situations, God may simply have a reason that we don’t understand for rejecting our plea. Both James and his audience understand this. In reality, the prayer that God wills against is not a prayer that is “in the name of Christ.”
- 4. Just as Mt. 21:21 does not mean literally every request will be granted, this passage doesn’t mean that every sickness will be cured.
  - a. The sick person is “anointed” in the name of The Lord which, contrary to popular belief, is not a magic phrase. The name of Christ means for the cause of Christ by his authority.
    - 1) **Mt. 18:5** “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me”
    - 2) **Mt. 18:20** “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”
    - 3) “In the name of Christ” means that something is in agreement with His will.
      - a) **1 John 5:14** If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.
  - b. It’s never been God’s will that every sick person be healed in this world.
    - 1) We know Paul had a thorn in the flesh that he pleaded three times with God to remove and God refused (**2 Cor. 12:8-9**)
    - 2) We know that God chose not to heal trophimus **2 Tim. 4:20** Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.
- C. Then what is this passage telling us?

1. Since the prayer of God's elect holds great power over every problem that Christians may face, we (and especially church leaders) should wield this power for one another, knowing that it is effective, even when it involves physical illness.
  - a. The cultural movement in the last 200 years, even within the church, has tried to limit God's working to ways that can easily be explained through nature or random chance or that are limited to spiritual realities, as in attitudes, wisdom, etc.
  - b. We hesitate when we pray sometimes because we don't want to ask God to do too much or to pray in a way that might sound too 'charismatic.' Though we reject the falsehood that is being advocated among charismatics today, we need to have the understanding that the mountains cannot stand in the way of our prayers.
- D. The spiritually sick.
  1. While we have spent much more time on the topic of physical sickness, the item of greater importance to the Christian is our spiritual health.
  2. Starting with the statement in 5:15, "and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven," James directly addresses this issue.

**James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**

- A. As we're waiting for Christ, another way for Christians to fulfill the command to love one another is through mutual accountability and prayerful encouragement.
- B. It shocks me that Alcoholics Anonymous has picked up on this tool for Christian growth, and in many places they're doing it better or at least more consistently than the church is.
  1. Do you know what they've discovered? People with terrible addictions have found that if they'll just get together with other people dealing with the same issues, and if they choose to be completely honest with themselves and with God and with each other about their struggles they find themselves overcoming habits that had seemed impossible to quit before.
- C. There is great power in confession and prayer. God has designed us to confess sin. God designed us to grow in *groups*.
- D. Sometimes we fail to understand the importance of mutual encouragement:
  1. We show up on Sunday to church and see everyone dressed decently, and we don't often talk about what is really going on in our lives spiritually.
  2. Sometimes we smile and shake hands and wish each other well, yet we don't quite break through to an encouraging friendship that says, 'I'm trying to walk the narrow road, and it's challenging, and I need your help, and I'm interested in helping you.'
  3. For many Christians, this is the missing link that we need to break through from a weak faith to a faith that overcomes and experiences the abundant life.
- E. This is a direct challenge to each Christian here:
  1. Get with a fellow Christian whom you can open up to and trust.
  2. You talk about what God has been doing with you, such as what you have been learning, what you are struggling with, what you have failed at. Encourage each other and consistently pray for each other.
  3. Do this, and you will see what James means by "be healed."

**James 5:19-20 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**

- A. Rescuing the lost.
  1. Some will fall away. For all that is happening with people in the church, there are always going to be some who are growing distant from God and His people.
  2. The easy thing to do is just to sit back and let people drift away.

- a. For whatever reason: 'I don't want to be nosy, I don't know all the details, I don't want someone to think I'm judgmental, I'm not perfect myself, I'll let the minister take care of it, this really isn't my thing,, etc.'
- b. All these excuses on some level fall short.
- 3. A most challenging ministry. Here is yet another part of loving, and it can be the most challenging ministry you ever experience.
  - a. A brother from Africa once told me his plan for convincing an entire pedobaptist church to be immersed; he told me the plan as he was on his way to deliver his lesson to the church. His plan was this: "we will beg them, we will plead with them." He begged and pleaded, and it seemed like we got laughed out of the church. But a few weeks later he won two of those souls to the truth.
  - b. Going to someone who is walking in sin may be one of the hardest things you do.
  - c. Anyone who regularly goes after people who are straying will on occasion be accused of being nosy, judgmental, Pharisaical, etc., even though your motive may be as pure as gold.
  - d. But the love of Christ compels us to turn the straying one back!
  - e. Anyone who does the hard work of winning people back to the truth with regularity will also on occasion be thanked by some of those very same people.
  - f. Why should we be soul-winners? Because if we can save one soul from death, it's worth it. If we plead with 10 in our lifetime, who we see on the sidelines at church, and we take them to dinner and encourage and pray and challenge, and we only win one, then let's win that one.
  - g. Why? Because that one will be saved from death.
  - h. Like the African brother, plead if we have to, if only for the sake of one soul.

Conclusion: The book of James should keep us busy for the rest of our lives if we continue to humbly receive the word implanted. Of all of that James has outlined for us in terms of our attitudes and our lives, let's remember that we do it because we're waiting for our Lord, because a new world is coming. Let's endure whatever may stand in the way of us reaching the goal. Let's do our best to be diligent in what we do and careful in what we say, let's be together as a church, meeting each situation in our lives as people of faith and meeting each other's spiritual needs as the day approaches.

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Zack Opheim received God's grace ten years ago in Owatonna, Minnesota. In 2003, he moved on to attend Oklahoma Christian University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Bible. It was there that he met the woman he couldn't live without, then Elizabeth Wilcox; they have been happily married for five years. After graduating, they spent two years working in China. Zack is now ministering at the Aberdeen church of Christ in Aberdeen, South Dakota, where he and his family have lived for a year and a half. Last fall, The Lord blessed Zack and his wife with their first child, Isaac Daniel, who is now almost six months old! When Zack gets a little free time he spends it all with family, gardening, and fishing.

## NOTES

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Thanks for Coming – See you Next Year